

HQ U.S. Army Installation Management Agency, Europe Region



Public Affairs Office
Unit 29353, Box 200 APO AE 09014
69033 Heidelberg
DSN 370-7549/7235 Tel.: 06221-57-7549/7235

PRESS RELEASE

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IMA-E Environmental Study Reveals Biodiversity Profits From Military Training

Heidelberg, GE – Ecosystem disturbances caused by military training exercises is beneficial to a variety of plant and animal species according to a recent Installation Management Agency - Europe (IMA-EURO) environmental study.

The study observed that two to three times more threatened and endangered species thrive in the Grafenwoehr and Hohenfels military training areas than in national parks, national forests and other designated conservation areas in Bavaria due to the effects training has on the land.

IMA-EURO contracted with the Center for Environmental Management of Military Lands (CEMML), at Colorado State University to investigate the effects of military training on a variety of plant and animal species. The study's purpose was to document the effects of military training exercises on a variety of species that inhabit these regions.

According to Dr. Steven Warren, Ecologist with Colorado State University and Reiner Buettner of the Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology in Hemhofen, Germany, scientists have long appreciated the abundance of wildlife living on military lands.

In the study, Warren and Buettner hypothesized that the reason more species are able to thrive in the military training areas is that the training-related disturbances are non-uniformly distributed in time, space and intensity, thus providing habitat for a large number of species with widely varying habitat requirements, including those that are disturbance-averse as well as those that are disturbance-dependent. The military training exercises replace, to some extent, natural disturbances which have been reduced or eliminated by well-intentioned land managers in many other areas.

To test their hypothesis Warren and Buettner evaluated the distribution of four plant species, two amphibians and two insects in relation to maneuver disturbance. All eight species exhibited varying degrees of dependence on maneuver disturbance; some species required as much as 80 – 100 percent recent disturbance of the soil surface.

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Environmental Study

Warren believes that if military maneuver disturbance is removed from this environment, many of the threatened and endangered species that thrive in the military training sites today will disappear.

Preservation of the environment is a core mission responsibility of IMA. IMA-EURO has an office dedicated to ensuring host nation environmental laws are followed and that the installations implement strict environmental protection procedures. All IMA-EURO installations maintain Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans to ensure optimal protection of the natural resources in support of the military mission. IMA-EURO's study purpose was to produce solid scientific data that land disturbance created by military exercises can be beneficial to the ecosystem rather than the common belief that military activities are only destructive to the environment. IMA-EURO believes the study successfully laid the groundwork to ensure that military training activities can continue, not only despite their nomination as NATURA 2000 sites, but because they have maintained high ecologic value as military training areas. The study also ties in very well with the objectives of the European Union (EU) – driven NATURA 2000 process. NATURA 2000 is the centerpiece of EU nature and biodiversity policy, resulting in establishment of an EU-wide network of high ecological value areas. It was designed to assure the long-term survival of Europe's most valuable, threatened species and habitats by enabling the ecological interaction between areas of European importance. However, if an area was selected as a NATURA 2000 site, it does not mean that all human activities have to stop. Instead, the aim is to assure that the current use is sustainable: ecologically, economically and socially. European states are responsible for implementing this network in order to build nature conservation instruments, protecting endangered flora and fauna species in Europe. In most European countries, including Germany, this has resulted in nominating large parcels of land as NATURA 2000 sites, also used by the U.S. military for training.

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The U.S. Army Installation Management Agency, Europe (IMA-E) is one of seven regional offices created Oct. 1, 2002, as part of an Army-wide initiative to focus management of Army installations around the world under one organization. IMA-E is responsible for all facets of support for U.S. Army Soldiers and families in Europe from drivers licenses to child care to force protection. As the landlord for all U.S. Army facilities in Europe, IMA-E is responsible for infrastructure and continuing the Army's strong commitment to environmental protection. Its higher headquarters is located in Arlington, Va.